

Carolina Bays

Concentrated in the coastal plain of the southeastern United States is a series of elliptical or oval depressions. These depressions are called bays, so named for the sweet bay, loblolly bay and red bay trees found growing around them.

There are about 500,000 bays in the southeast. Most are small. Few are more than 500 feet in length. The Jones Lake bay, however, is approximately 8,000 feet long. The lake comprises 224 acres and nearby Salters Lake is 315 acres.

In the past, nearly all bays contained open water. Today, most bays are filled with wet, organic soils and overgrown with swamp-type vegetation. Only a few relict lakes remain. The state parks system includes six Carolina bays.

Scientists have long wondered about the origin of the Carolina bays. Many hypotheses have been proposed, including underground springs, wind and wave action, dissolution of subsurface minerals and meteor showers. So far, no single explanation has gained universal acceptance.

Bay lakes are shallow, ranging from 8 to 12 feet in depth. One of the shallowest of the Bladen County lakes, Jones Lake has a depth of 8.7 feet and a shoreline of 2.2 miles. Like most lakes in the area, it is not fed by streams or springs but depends upon precipitation. Therefore, water levels fluctuate. Water in most bay lakes is highly acidic, containing few plant nutrients. The water is often dark in color due to the decomposing plant matter, called peat, at the lake bottom.

Statewide interest in the bay lakes emerged in 1827 and legislation prohibiting private ownership of land covered by lake waters was passed in 1911, stating that any lake in Bladen, Columbus and Cumberland counties of 500 acres or more was property of the state for the use and benefit of all people. Additional legislation in 1929 designated lakes of 50 acres or more as state property.



Flora & Fauna

Jones Lake State Park is a diverse plant community with typical bay vegetation. Evergreens, including sweet bay, loblolly bay and red bay, are predominant. Because the bog around the lake, also called a pocosin, has poor drainage and is subject to flooding and drought, the area has few herbaceous plants.

Sheep laurel, blueberry and fetterbush thrive in the acidic soil. Pond pine and Atlantic white cedar are common in the bay forest. These trees usually do not reproduce in such shaded areas but natural fires have burned the underbrush, allowing their growth.

Today, controlled burning is essential for the perpetuation of these communities. Without fire, the character of these vegetative communities would eventually change.

The warm climate at Jones Lake attracts a variety of reptiles. On a sunny day, see Carolina anoles and fence lizards basking in the solar warmth. To the delight of campers, frogs and toads often fill the night with music. Spring peeper, southern leopard frog, bullfrog and cricket frog are abundant. Brimley's chorus frog and the endangered pine barrens tree frog also reside at Jones Lake.

Bird watchers applaud the many species found in the park. Carolina wrens and chickadees, as well as black vultures, are common. In the bog, spot a yellow-throated warbler or white-eyed vireo.

Pileated woodpecker, red-tailed hawk and red cockaded woodpecker, an endangered species, also make their homes in the park. While enjoying the melodies of songbirds, catch a glimpse of a wild turkey, white-tailed deer, fox or cottontail rabbit.

History Highlights

The bay lakes region of Bladen County was settled during colonial times. Jones Lake was known as Woodward's Lake for Samuel Woodward, a justice of the peace in the mid-1700s. The lake was later renamed for Isaac Jones, a landowner who donated a tract of land on which Elizabethtown was established in 1773. Salters Lake received its name from Sallie Salter, a Revolutionary War heroine who spied on the Tories encamped in town.

For approximately 100 years after the area was settled, landowners practiced farming along the river lowlands and creek bottoms. Longleaf pines, then prolific in the area, were used for the production of naval stores, primarily providing turpentine, pitch and timber. Due to the growth of the turpentine, lumber and cotton industries, the area's human population soon increased beyond the soil's capacity to support it. However, by 1935, with the fall of the cotton farmer and the exhaustion of industry, large segments of the population found themselves on submarginal land.

The 1930s were a trying economic time for the country. To create jobs, the federal government poured millions of dollars into conservation. For state parks, these



federal assistance programs created a large amount of development and acquisition, giving the park system its impetus.

The federal government purchased submarginal farm lands in the Jones Lake area at an average cost of \$4.51 per acre and the Resettlement Administration managed the area from 1936-39. In order to stimulate the depressed economy, a program of land conservation and utilization began. With local materials and talents, the Resettlement Administration developed a recreation center at Jones Lake. A large bathhouse, beach, refreshment stand and picnic grounds were constructed.

The property was turned over to the state of North Carolina on July 1, 1939, for operation under a lease agreement. In October, 1954, the land was given to the state by the federal government. Jones Lake opened in the summer of 1939 as the first state park for blacks and achieved immediate popularity. In later years the park, like all other North Carolina parks, became fully integrated.

Besides serving as a source of recreation, the park has played other important roles in the area's history. During World War II, Jones Lake was open only for picnicking and fishing while the area was used by the Anti-Aircraft School from Camp Davis for special training programs. In the spring of 1970, the area achieved prominence when astronomers gathered there to view a total eclipse of the sun.

Nature's Classroom

Rangers hold regularly scheduled educational and interpretive programs about Jones Lake State Park.

Educational materials about Jones Lake State Park have been developed for grades 6-8 and are correlated to North Carolina's competency-based curriculum in science, social studies, mathematics and English/language arts.

The Jones Lake program introduces students to the unique geology of Carolina bays. Accompanying the program is a teacher's booklet and workshop, free of charge to educators. Contact the park office to arrange a special program for your group or class.

Camping

Family camping: Jones Lake State Park has 20 campsites. Each wooded site is equipped with a picnic table and grill. Drinking water and restrooms with showers are located nearby. One site has electrical and water hookups and is available for both tents and recreational vehicles. However, the park does not offer a dump station for recreational vehicles. Campsites are available on a first-come basis.

Group camping: A primitive group campsite, available for organized groups, is open year round. The site includes a fire circle and grill, picnic tables, benches and a full bathhouse. Water is also available. The site is available by reservation only and reservations must be made at least one week in advance. No more than 35 people can occupy the site.



Picnicking

A picnic is a great way to enjoy a day out-of-doors. More than 50 tables and eight grills are available at the picnic grounds. A grassy area, also available for picnicking, is adjacent to the beach where the shade of pine and cypress trees promises respite from the sun. The covered picnic shelter, perfect for a large gathering, will accommodate up to 150 people. Use of the picnic shelter is free of charge unless reservations are requested.

Hiking Trails

Bay Trail is a four-mile loop around Jones Lake, offering an excellent chance to experience the habitats of a Carolina bay. Wander through dense vegetation and over boggy soil to view lovely lakeside flora. Large pond cypress trees, draped with Spanish moss, line the shore and grow in the shallow water. Leatherwood plants with delicate white flowers, also called titi, overhang the water's edge. Several short side-trails lead to the lake, allowing hikers a chance to catch their breath while viewing the vista across the lake. Begin Bay Trail at the picnic area or campground. Contact park staff for trail interpretation.

Cedar Loop Trail offers a one-mile journey through both the bay forest and sand ridge communities.

Salters Lake Trail is a one mile, one way trail that connects the Bay Trail to Salters Lake. The trail passes through bay forest as well as sand ridge communities and ends at the shore of Salter Lake.



Swimming

Enjoy the aquatic activities offered by this cool, tea-colored lake. The sandy beach of Jones Lake is ideal for sunbathing and the shallow water is a swimmer's delight. A fee is charged for swimming from Memorial Day through Labor Day. A concession stand and bathhouse are located nearby. A pier provides access for swimming, paddleboats and canoes.

Boating and Fishing

Boating and fishing are popular pastimes at Jones Lake. A road to the lake for small craft is located at the west side of the picnic area. The access road ends at the lakeshore and only motors that are 10 horsepower and under are allowed on the lake. Canoes and paddleboats may be rented from Memorial Day through Labor Day at the boathouse adjacent to the pier. Vehicular access to Salters Lake requires a permit issued by park staff.

Few fish species are present due to the water's acidity. Yellow perch are the most abundant. Chain pickerel, catfish, chub suckers and blue-spotted sunfish also occupy the lakes. Pier fishing is allowed only from lake trail access points.

Rules & Regulations

Make your visit a safe and rewarding experience. Some of our rules are posted throughout the park for the protection of our park and our visitors. A complete list is available at the park office. Help preserve our natural resources by observing the following:

- ❑ The removal of any plant, animal, rock or artifact is prohibited.
- ❑ All North Carolina parks are wildlife preserves. Hunting and trapping are prohibited.
- ❑ Fishing is permitted only during park hours. All regulations of the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission apply.
- ❑ Do not litter. Help maintain a clean environment for other visitors by putting trash in proper receptacles. State law requires aluminum cans to be placed in recycling containers.
- ❑ Firearms and fireworks are prohibited.
- ❑ The possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages is prohibited.
- ❑ North Carolina motor vehicle traffic laws apply in the park.
- ❑ Pets must be on a leash no longer than six feet. Pets are not allowed in the bathhouse or swimming areas.

For Your Safety

To prevent accidents, remember these safety tips.

- ❑ Do not swim alone. Keep a friend within reach.
- ❑ Swim in the designated area only.
- ❑ Be alert to approaching storms and seek appropriate shelter.
- ❑ Due to the shallow depth of the lake, do not dive from the piers. Do not run on the pier.
- ❑ For safety reasons, the number of boats allowed on the lake at any one time may be limited.
- ❑ Poisonous snakes and ticks may be found in the area. Exercise caution.
- ❑ The park is surrounded by designated gamelands. Be alert during hunting seasons. Hunting may take place nearby.

Contact park staff for other safety tips or for an explanation of park rules.

The N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation is a division of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Michael F. Easley
Governor



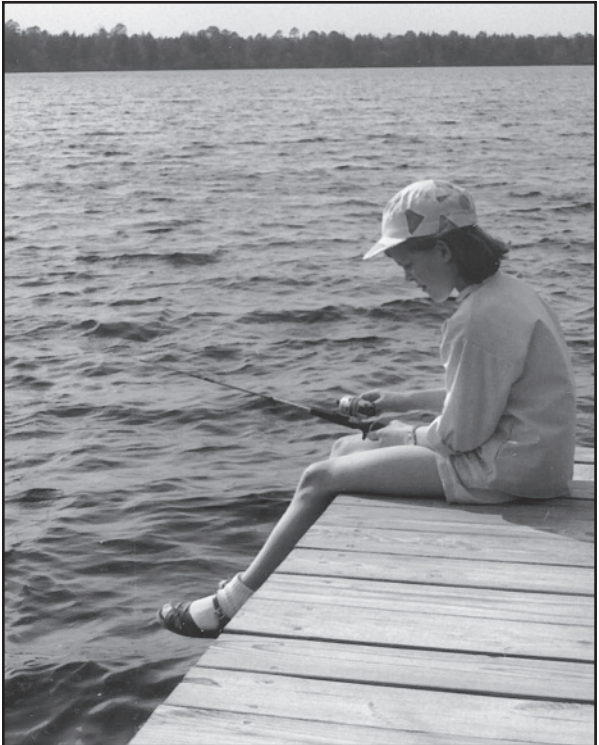
William G. Ross Jr.
Secretary

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Welcome!

Venture to Jones Lake State Park and view one of the greatest geological mysteries of the eastern United States — the phenomenon of the Carolina bays. Adjacent to the Bladen Lakes State Forest and home of two natural lakes, Jones and Salters lakes, the 2,208-acre park is a nature lover's delight.

Peaceful surroundings and a variety of facilities, including a trail with several outlooks that circles Jones Lake, make this state park a favorite for hiking, picnicking, swimming, fishing and camping.



Information

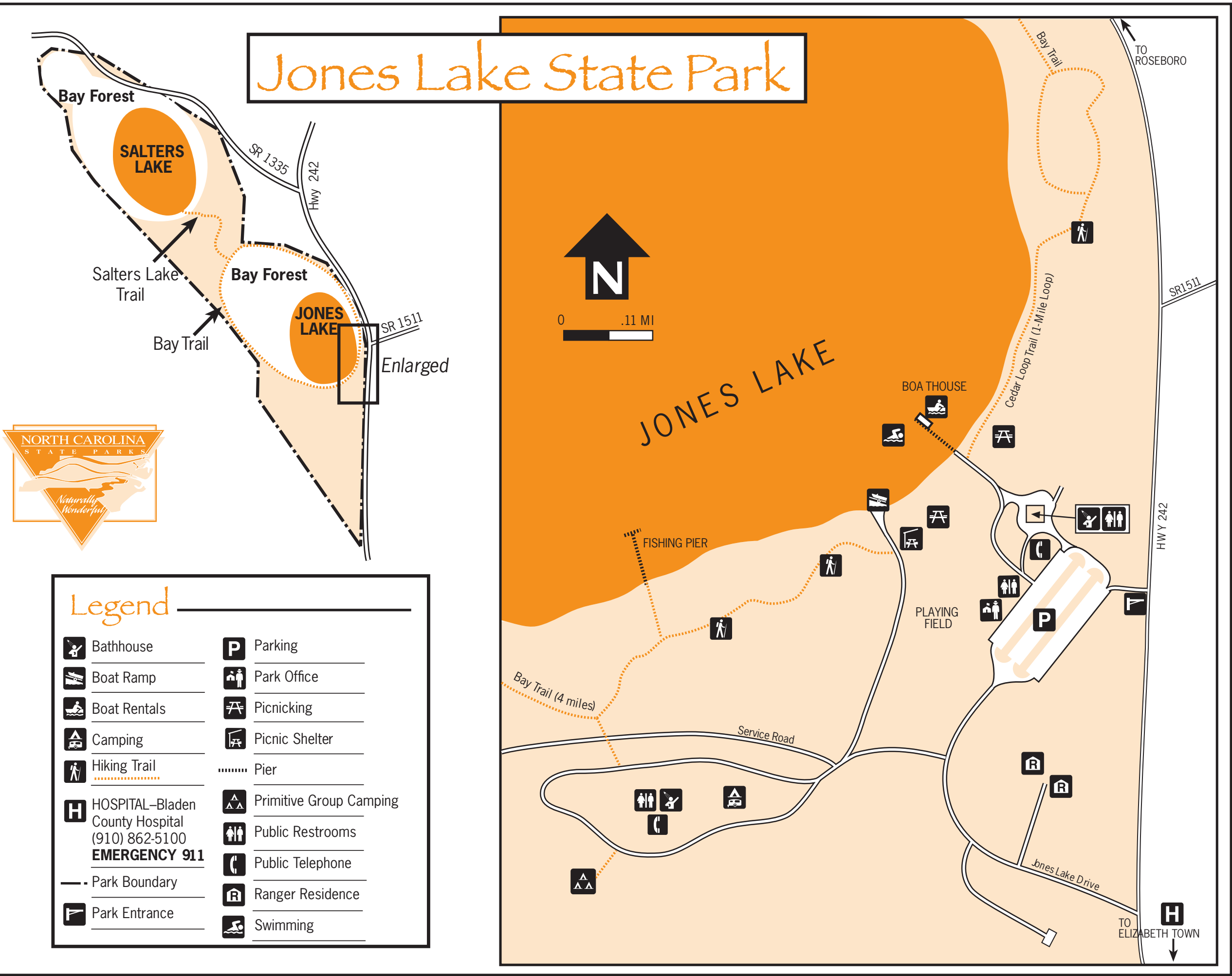
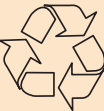
To learn more about Jones Lake State Park, contact:

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www.ncparks.gov

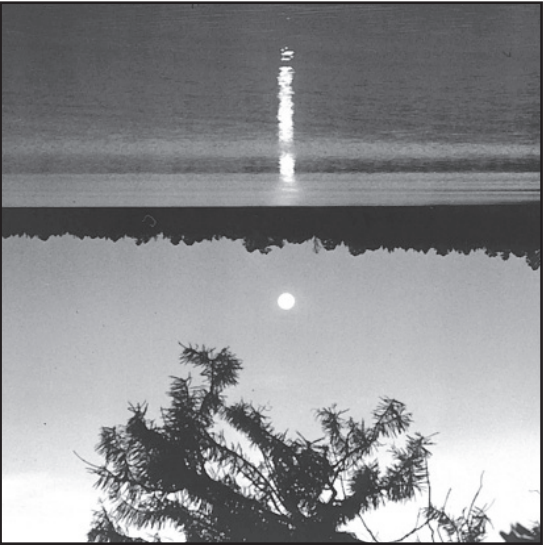
Discover other North Carolina state parks and recreation areas, contact:

N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation
Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources
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N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation
Department of Environment and Natural Resources



Jones Lake
State Park

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Jones Lake State Park is located in Bladen County, four miles north of Elizabethtown, on Highway 242.

Park Hours

November - February	8 a.m. - 6 p.m.
March - May, September & October	8 a.m. - 8 p.m.
June - August	8 a.m. - 9 p.m.
Closed Christmas Day	